



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

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August 27, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue:

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has provided the flexibility and resources to meet the needs of students who rely on USDA's child nutrition programs. As you know, the 2020-21 school year will be unprecedented with myriad strategies for virtual, blended, and in-person instruction throughout the nation. These different approaches require additional federal regulatory waivers from USDA to ensure our children's nutritional needs are met regardless of the format of their education.

I thank you for recognizing this need for the 2020-21 school year by already extending nationwide waivers for meal times, non-congregate feeding, meal pattern, parent/guardian pickup, offer versus serve flexibility for senior high schools, as well as the monitoring programs associated with those waivers. I also appreciate the unprecedented flexibility USDA granted to allow schools to serve meals over the summer of 2020. Additionally, your recent approval of a waiver allowing Michigan to fully utilize the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program as schools cope with the ongoing crisis will be vital to our kids.

The correlation between nutrition and educational attainment is well documented and, unfortunately, some of these kids can only count on the breakfast and lunch provided to them at their school, further exacerbating the need for increased flexibility.

As we saw when we visited Kalamazoo Loaves and Fishes on August 21st, food insecurity needs to be addressed by innovative approaches, like the widely successful Farmers to Families Food Box program, during these unprecedented times.

The economic impact of this vicious virus has also increased the number of students who rely on school meal programs, while also forcing administrators to use extra resources to reach students who receive free or reduced-cost meals at school but who may now no longer be going to a physical school each weekday. To that end, I write to request USDA use its authority and purview to issue additional guidance to mitigate the risks of food insecurity brought on by the

coronavirus pandemic. Specifically, I ask that you extend the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) Waivers as well as the Afterschool Activity Waiver and the subsequent reporting requirements throughout the 2020-21 school year.

These important steps will go a long way to ensure that our nation's students can focus on their education, whatever the format, without having to worry about when their next meal will come. Furthermore, it will advance USDA's commitment to fighting hunger and reducing food insecurity across the United States.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fred Upton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Fred Upton

Member of Congress